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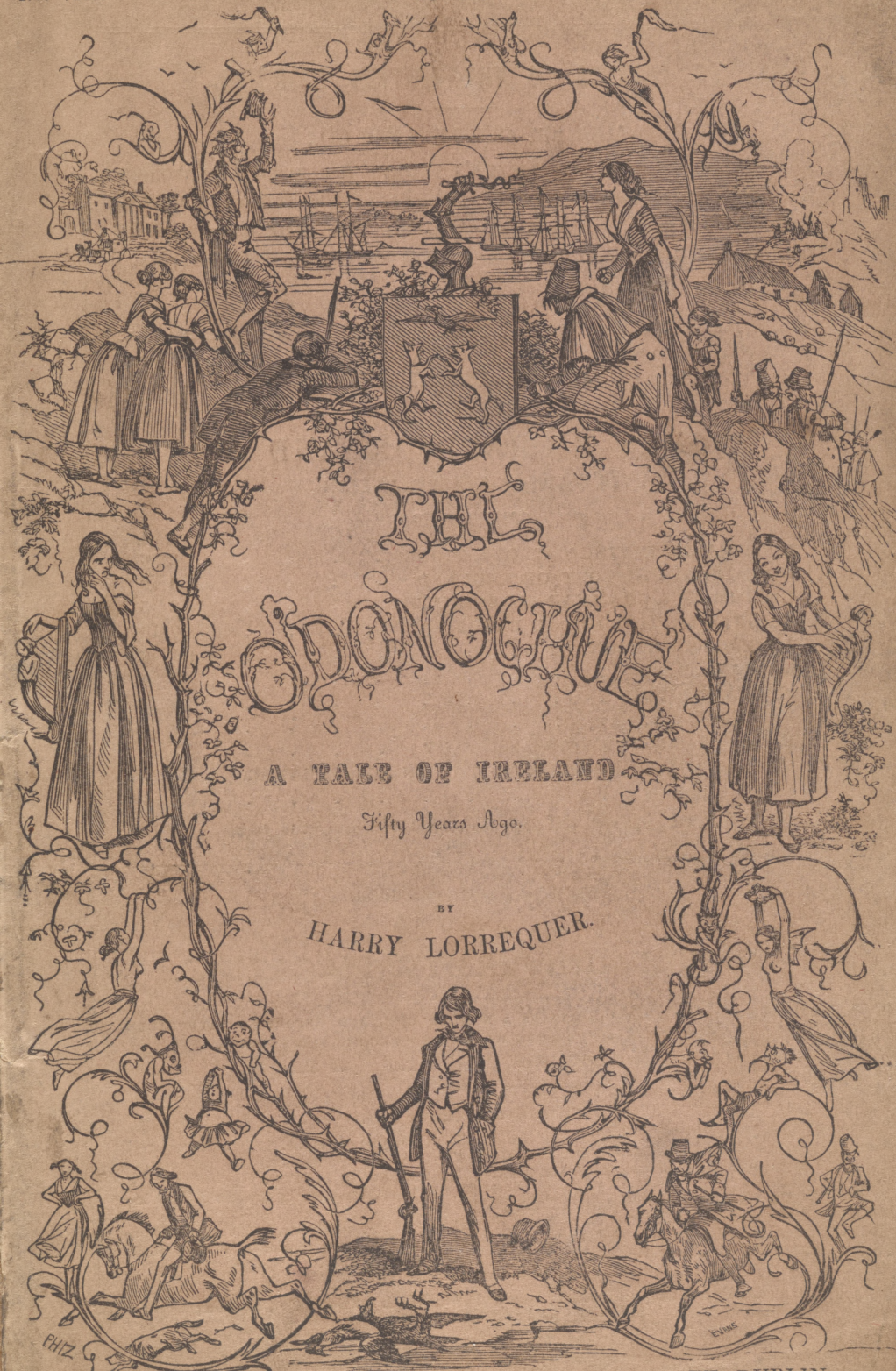

THE O'DONOGHUE

A TALE OF IRELAND

Fifty Years Ago.

BY

HARRY LORREQUER.

TO PIRATES IN THE BRITISH COLONIES.

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE CAPITAL AND ITS PLEASURES.

DUBLIN, at the time we speak of, possessed social attractions of a high order. Rank, beauty, intellect, and wealth, contributed their several influences; and while the tone of society had all the charms of a politeness now bygone, there was an admixture of native kindliness and cordiality, as distinctive as it was fascinating.

Almost every Irishman of rank travelled in those days. It was regarded as the last finishing-touch of education, and few nations possess quicker powers of imitation, or a greater aptitude in adapting foreign habitudes to home usages, than the Irish; for, while vanity with the Frenchman—coldness with the Englishman—and stolid indifference with the German, are insuperable barriers against this acquirement; the natural gaiety of Irish character, the buoyancy, but still more than all, perhaps, the inherent desire to please, suggest a quality, which, when cultivated and improved, becomes that great element of social success—the most precious of all drawing-room gifts—men call tact.

It would be a most unfair criterion of the tastes and pleasures of that day, were we to pronounce, from our experience of what Dublin now is. Provincialism had not then settled down upon the city, with all its petty attendant evils. The character of a metropolis was upheld by a splendid Court, a resident Parliament, a great and titled aristocracy. The foreground figures of the time were men whose names stood high, and whose station was recognized at every Court of Europe. There was wealth more than proportioned to the cheapness of the country; and while ability and talent were the most striking features of every circle, the taste for gorgeous display exhibited within doors and without, threw a glare of splendour over the scene, that served to illustrate, but not eclipse the prouder glories of mind. The comparative narrowness of the circle, and the total absence of English reserve, produced a more intimate admixture of all the ranks which constitute good society here than in London, and the advantages were evident; for while the aristocrat gained immeasurably, from ready intercourse with men whose pursuits were purely intellectual, so the latter acquired a greater expan-

siveness, and a wider liberality in his views, from being divested of all the trammels of mere professional habit, and threw off his pedantry, as a garment unsuited to his position in society. But what more than all else was the characteristic of the time, was the fact, that social eminence—the "succés de salon"—was an object to every one. From the proud peer, who aspired to rank and influence in the councils of the state, to the rising barrister, ambitious of parliamentary distinction—from the mere fashionable idler of the squares, to the deep plotter of political intrigue—this was alike indispensable. The mere admission into certain circles was nothing—the fact of mixing with the hundred others who are announced, and bow, and smile, and slip away, did not then serve to identify a man as belonging to a distinct class in society; nor would the easy platitudes of the present day, in which the fool or the fop can always have the ascendant, suffice for the absence of conversational ability, ready wit, and sharp intelligence, which were assembled around every dinner-table of the capital.

It is not our duty, still less our inclination, to inquire why have all these goodly attractions left us, nor wherefore is it, that, like the art of staining glass, social agreeability should be lost for ever. So it would seem, however; we have fallen upon tiresome times, and he who is old enough to remember pleasanter ones, has the sad solace of knowing that he has seen the last of them.

Crowded as the capital was, with rank, wealth, and influence, the arrival of Sir Marmaduke Travers was not without its "eclat." His vast fortune was generally known; besides that, there was a singularity in the fact of an Englishman, bound to Ireland by the very slender tie of a small estate, without connexions or friends in the country, coming to reside in Dublin, which gratified native pride as much as it excited public curiosity; and the rapidity with which the most splendid mansion in Stephen's-green was prepared for his reception, vied in interest with the speculation, as to what possible cause had induced him to come and live there. The rumours of his intended magnificence, and the splendour of his equipage, furnished gossip for the town, and paragraphs for the papers.

It was, indeed, a wondrous change for those two young girls—from the stillness and solitude of Glenflesk, to the gaiety of the capital—from a life of reflection and retirement, to the dazzling scenes and fascinating pleasures of a new world. Upon Sybella the first effect was to increase her natural timidity—to render her more cautious, as she found herself surrounded by influences so novel and so strange; and in this wise there was mingled with her enjoyment, a sense of hesitation and

fear, that tinged all her thoughts, and even impressed themselves upon her manner. Not so with Kate: the instinct that made her feel at home in the world, was but the consciousness of her own powers of pleasing. She loved society as the scene, where, however glossed over by conventionalities, human passions and feelings were at work, and where the power of influencing or directing others gave a stimulus to existence, far higher and nobler than all the pleasures of retirement. It was life, in fact. Each day had its own separate interests, dramatizing, as it were, the real, and making of the ordinary events of the world a romance, of which she felt herself a character. As much an actor as spectator, she threw herself into the pleasures of society with a zest which need only have the accompaniments of youth, beauty, and talents, to make it contagious. Thus differing in character, as in appearance, these two young girls at once became the acknowledged beauties of the capital, and each was followed by a troop of admirers, whose enthusiasm exhibited itself in a hundred different ways. Their favourite colours at a ball became the fashionable emblems of the next day on the promenade, and even the ladies caught up the contagion, and enlisted themselves into parties, whose rivalry amused none so much as those, in whom it had its origin.

While the galling enmity of Celt to Saxon was then stirring in secret the hearts of thousands in the country, and fashioning itself into the elements of open insurrection, the city was divided by a more peaceful animosity, and the English and the Irish party were arrayed against each other in the cause of beauty.

It would be impossible to conceive a rivalry from which every ungenerous or unworthy feeling was more perfectly excluded. So far from any jealousy obtruding, every little triumph of one was a source of unalloyed heartfelt pleasure to the other; and while Sybella sympathized with all the delight of Kate's followers in an Irish success, so Kate, with characteristic feeling, enjoyed nothing so much as the chagrin of her own party, when Sybella was unquestionably in the ascendant. Happily for us, we are not called upon to explain a phenomenon so novel and so pleasing—enough if we record it. Certain it is, the absence of all envy enhanced the fascinations of each, and exalted the objects in the eyes of their admirers. On this point alone opinion was undivided—none claimed any superiority for their idol, by ascribing to her a greater share of this good gift; nor could even malice impute a difference in their mutual affection.

One alone among the circle of their acquaintances stood neutral—unable to divest himself enough of natural partiality, to be a fair and

just judge. Sir Marmaduke Travers candidly avowed that he felt himself out of court. The leaders of fashion, the great arbiters of "bon ton," were happily divided, and if England could boast of a majority among the Castle party, Ireland turned the scale with those who, having enjoyed opportunities of studying foreign manner, pronounced Kate's the very perfection of French agreeability, united to native loveliness and attraction.

So much for "the sensation," to use the phrase appropriated by the newspapers, their entrance into the fashionable life of Dublin excited. Let us now return to the parties themselves. In a large and splendidly furnished apartment of Sir Marmaduke's Dublin residence, sat the Baronet, his daughter, and Kate, at breakfast, alternately reading from the morning papers, and discussing the news as they ate.

"Well, but, my dear Kate"—Sir Marmaduke had emancipated himself from the more formal "Miss" a week before—"turn to another column, and let us hear if they have any political news."

"There's not a word, sir, unless an allusion to the rebel colour of my dress at the Chancellor's ball be such. You see, Sybella, Falkner fights not under my banner."

"I think you stole the Chancellor himself from me," replied Sybella, laughing, "and I must say most unhandsomely too: he had just given me his arm, to lead me to a chair, when you said something in a half whisper—I could not catch it if I would—he dropped my arm, burst out a laughing, and hurried over to Lord Clonmel—I suppose to repeat it."

"It was not worth relating, then," said Kate, with a toss of her head. "I merely remarked how odd it was Lady Ridgeway couldn't dance in time, with such beautiful clocks on her stocking."

"O, Kate dearest!" said Sybella, who, while she could not refrain from a burst of laughter, became deep scarlet at her friend's hardihood.

"Why Meddlicot told that as his own at supper," said Sir Marmaduke.

"So he did, sir; but I cautioned him that a license for wholesale does not permit the retail even of jokes. Isn't the worthy sheriff a druggist? But what have we here—all manner of changes on the staff—Lord Sellbridge to join his regiment at Hounslow, vice, Captain —— your brother, Sybella—Captain Frederick Travers"—and she reddened slightly at the words. "I did not know he was appointed aid-de-camp to the Viceroy."

"Nor did I, my dear," said Sir Marmaduke. "I knew he was most

anxious to make the exchange with Lord Sellbridge; but this is the first I have heard of the success of his negociation."

"You see, Kate," said Sybella, while a sly glance shot beneath her long-lashed lids, "that even Fred has become a partizan of Ireland."

"Perhaps the prospect of the revolt he hinted at," replied Kate, with an air of scornful pride, "has made the Guardsman prefer this country for the moment."

"I incline to a very different reason," said Sybella, but in a voice so subdued as to be only audible to Kate herself, who again blushed deeply, and seemed greatly confused.

"Ha! here it is," said Sir Marmaduke, reading aloud a long paragraph from a morning paper, which, descanting on the abortiveness of any effort to destroy the peace of the realm, by enemies without or within its frontiers, concluded with a glowing panegyric on the blessings of the British constitution. "'The government, while confiding implicitly on the loyalty and bravery of his Majesty's people, have yet neglected no measures of precaution against the insane and rash attempts of our 'natural enemies,' whose temerity is certain of again receiving the same severe lesson which every attempt upon our shores has taught them.' Yes—yes—very prompt and active measures, nothing could be better," muttered he to himself.

"May I ask what they consist in—these precautionary movements?" said Kate.

"A full organization of the militia and yeomanry," replied Sir Marmaduke, proudly, for he commanded a regiment of 'Northamptonshire fencibles.' Strengthening the different garrisons in large towns—mounting guns of heavy calibre on the forts—"

A hearty burst of laughter broke from Kate, which she made no effort to control whatever.

"I cannot help laughing, because that same word recalls a conversation I once heard between two French officers in Bruges; one of them who seemed to know Ireland well, averred that these forts were so placed as only to be capable of battering down each other. I know he instanced two on the southern coast, which in three discharges must inevitably make a drawn battle of it."

"My dear young lady," said Sir Marmaduke, with an unusual gravity, "it is not exactly to our enemies we must look for any warm encomium on our means of defence, nor has experience yet shown, that British courage can be justly a subject for a Frenchman's laughter."

"And as to the militia and yeomanry," continued Kate, for she seemed bent on tormenting, and totally indifferent to the consequences

regarding herself, "Colonel Delcamp called them 'arsenals ambulantes,' admirably contrived to provide an invading army with arms and ammunition."

"I heartily wish your friend, Colonel Delcamp, would favour us with a visit of inspection," said the Baronet, scarcely able to control his anger.

"I should not think the occurrence unlikely," was the cool reply, "and if so, I may be permitted to assure you, that you will be much pleased with his manners and agreeability." Sybella's imploring look was all in vain; Kate, as she herself said, belonged to a race who neither gave nor took quarter, and such a controversy was the very conflict she gloried in. How it was to be carried on any further, is not easy to foresee, had not the difficulty been solved by the entrance of Frederick Travers, come to communicate the news of his appointment. While Sir Marmaduke and Sybella expressed their joy at his success, Kate, half chagrined at the interruption to a game, where she already deemed herself the winner, walked towards the window and looked out.

"Have I nothing like congratulation to expect from Miss O'Donoghue," said Frederick, as he placed himself at her side.

"I scarcely knew if it were a subject where congratulation would be suitable. To exchange the glories of London life, the fascinations of a great Court, and the society of the first people in the land, for the lesser splendours of a second-rate capital; perhaps you might have smiled at the simplicity of wishing you joy for all this," and here her voice assumed a deeper, fuller accent. "I own that I do not feel Ireland in a position to bear even a smile of scorn without offence to one of her children."

"I was not aware till now, that you could suspect me of such a feeling."

"You are an Englishman, sir, that's enough," said Kate hurriedly; "in *your* eyes, we are the people you have conquered, and it would be too much to expect you should entertain great respect for the prejudices you have laboured to subdue. But after all, there is a distinction worth making, and you have not made it."

"And that is, if I dare ask—"

"That is, there is a wide difference between conquering the territory, and gaining the affections of a people. You have succeeded in one; you'll never, at least by your present courses, accomplish the other."

"Speak more plainly to me," said Travers, who felt a double interest in a conversation which every moment contained an allusion that bore upon his own fortune.

"There, there, sir," said Kate, proudly, "your very request is an answer to yourself. We, here, who have known each other for some

time, have had opportunities of interchanging opinions and sentiments, cannot understand a simple matter in the same way, nor regard it in the same light, how do you suppose, that millions separated by distance, habits and pursuits, can attain to what we, with our advantages, have failed in. Can you not see that we are not the same people.

"But need our dissimilitudes sever—may they not be made rather ties to bind us more closely together," said he, tenderly.

"Equality for the future, even if we obtained it, cannot eradicate the memory of the past. The penal laws——."

"Come—come. There is no longer any thing there. See the University for instance—by-the-bye," and here Travers caught eagerly at the opportunity of escape, "what of Herbert, is not this near the time for his examination?"

"The very day, the 28th of February," said she, reading from a small memorandum book. It is six weeks yesterday since we have seen him—poor boy!"

"How pale and sickly he looked too. I wish with all my heart, he had not set his mind so eagerly on College success."

"It is only for women, to live without ambition of one sort or other;" replied Kate, sadly, "and a very poor kind of existence it is, I assure you."

"What if we were to make a party, and meet him as he comes out? We might persuade him to join us at dinner, too."

"Well thought of, Fred," said Sir Marmaduke. "Herbert seems to have forgotten us latterly, and knowing his anxiety to succeed, I really scrupled at the thought of idling him."

"It is very kind of you all," said Kate, with one of her sweetest smiles, "to remember the poor student, and there is nothing I should like better than the plan you propose."

"We must find out the hour they leave the Hall," said Frederick.

"I heard him say it was at four o'clock," said Sybella, timidly, venturing for the first time to interpose a word in the conversation.

"You have the best memory in the world, Sybella," whispered Kate in her friend's ear, and simple as the words were, they called the blush to her cheek in an instant.

The morning passed away in the thousand little avocations which affluence and ease have invented, to banish "ennui," and render life always interesting. A few minutes before four o'clock, the splendid equipage of Sir Marmaduke Travers, in all the massive perfection of

its London appointments, drew up at the outer gate of the University; the party preferring to enter the courts on foot.

As Frederick Travers, with his two lady companions, appeared within the walls, the murmur of their names ran through the crowd of gownsmen, already assembled in the court; for although by College time, it still wanted fifteen minutes of the hour, a considerable number of students were gathered together, anxious to hear the result of the day. The simple but massive style of the buildings; the sudden change from the tumult and noise of a crowded city, to the silence and quietude of these spacious quadrangles, the number of youths dressed in their University costume, and either gazing wistfully, at the door of the Examination Hall, or conversing eagerly together, were all matters of curious interest to the Travers' party, who saw themselves in a world so different from that they daily moved in. Nor were the loungers the students only; mixed up with them, here and there, might be seen, some of the leading barristers of the day, and one or two of the most distinguished members of the House of Commons—men, who themselves had tasted the sweets of College success, and were fain, even by a passing moment, to refresh the memory of youthful triumphs, and bring back, by the sight of familiar objects, the recollection of days, to which all the glories of after-life, are but poor in comparison. Many of these were recognized by the students, and saluted by them, with marks of profound respect; and one, a small mean-looking man with jet black eyes, and olive complexion, was received with a cheer, which was with difficulty arrested by a waving motion with his hand, and a gesture towards the door of the Hall, from which with a hollow cavernous sound, a heavy bolt was now drawn, and the wide portal opened. A general movement in the crowd showed how intense expectation then was, but it was destined to a further trial, for it was only the head porter dressed in his crimson robe, and carrying his cap at arms length before him, who, followed by the Provost, issued forth; the students removed their caps, and stood in respectful silence as he passed. Again the door was closed, and all was still.

"There is something in all this, that stimulates curiosity strongly," said Kate; "when I came in here, I could have waited patiently for an hour or two, but now, the sight of all these anxious faces, these prying looks, that seem eager to pierce the very door itself, those short sentences, broken by quick glances at the clock, have worked me up, to an excitement high and fevered as their own.

"It wants but a minute now," said Fred.

"I think the hand has not moved, for the last ten," said Sybella, smiling faintly.

"I hope he has gained the prize," muttered Kate, below her breath; and at the moment, the bell tolled, and the wide doors, as if burst open by the sound, were flung wide, and the human tide poured forth, and mingled with that beneath; but what a different aspect did it present. The faces were mostly flushed and heated, the eyes flashing, the dress disordered, the cravats awry, the hair tangled—all the signs of mental excitement, long and arduously sustained, were there, and save a few whose careless look and unmoved expression showed that their part had no high ambition at stake, all were impressed with the same character of mingled eagerness and exhaustion.

Many among these were quickly singled out and surrounded by troops of eager and anxious friends, and the passing stranger might easily read in the tone and accent of the speaker his fortune, whether good or evil.

"Where is Herbert?—where can he be?—I don't see him," said each of the Travers' party, as, mingling with the crowd, they cast their anxious looks on every side; but amid the bustle of the scene, the hurrying forms, and the babble of tongues, they felt bewildered and confused.

"Let us try at his chambers," said Frederick; "he will, in all likelihood, be there soon;" and at once they turned their steps towards the corner of the old square near the library, where Herbert lived his solitary life; for although nominally linked with a companion—a chum, in College parlance—he rarely made his appearance within the walls, and then only for a few days at a time.

When they reached the door, they found it open, and without further waiting, or any notice of their approach, they entered, but so noiselessly and quietly withal, that the deep accents of grief—the heavy sound of broken sobs—struck at once upon their ears. They stopped and gazed in silence at each other, reading, as it were, their own heartfelt fears in the face of each.

"Poor fellow," said Kate, as her proud lip trembled with agitation. 'This is a sad beginning."

"Let us go back," whispered Sybella, faintly, and her cheek was pale as death as she spoke.

"No, no," cried Frederick, hurriedly; "we must cheer him up. what signifies the whole affair—a piece of mere boyish ambition, that he'll only laugh at one of these days."

"Not so," said Kate. "The augury of success or failure in the

outset of life is no such trifle as you deem it. If he be faint-hearted, the game is up with him for ever—if he be made of sterner stuff, as one of his name and house ought to be, he'll revenge his present fall, by a great hereafter. Let me see him," and at once disengaging her arm, she walked forward, and entered the chamber; while Frederick and his sister retired to the court to await her return.

When Kate O'Donoghue entered the room, Herbert was seated before a table, on which his head was leaning, with his hands pressed against his face. At his feet lay his cap, and the books he carried with him from the Hall. Unconscious of her presence, lost to every thing, save his overwhelming affliction, the sobs came with a convulsive shudder that shook his frame, and made the very table rattle, while at intervals there broke from him a faint moan of heart-rending sorrow.

"My dear brother," said Kate, placing her arm around his neck. The boy started and looked up, and prepared as she was to see the traces of suffering there, she started at the ravages long days and nights of study and deep grief had left behind them: his eyes were sunk, and surrounded by dark circles, that made them seem quite buried beneath his brows; his forehead traversed by a net-work of blue veins, had that transparent thinness mental labour impresses, and his lips were thin and colourless; while on each cheek a burning spot of red looked like the mark of hectic. He made no answer; but the tears ran fast from his eyes, and his mouth quivered as he tried to say something.

She sat down beside him on the same chair, and bending her head, till the silken curls touched his very cheek, she spoke to him—not in words of encouragement or good cheer, for such her own instinct told her were inapplicable, but in the soft accents of affection, neither undervaluing the source of his grief, nor yet suffering him to be carried away by his own sense of his calamity. "Remember, my dear brother," said she, "you are not less dear to our hearts for all this—remember that for the casualties of the world, and its chances, we can only do our utmost—that success is not for us to determine, but to strive for. Had you won to-day, some other must now have grieved like you, and who can tell if he could count as many fond and loving hearts to feel for and console him."

"Oh, if you knew how I strived and longed—how I prayed for success," said he, in a voice almost stifled by convulsive throbs.

"And it will come yet, Herbert. The tree is only the more fruitful when the knife has cut down to its very heart. Yours is not the nature to be deterred by one repulse, nor yours the name to be stamped with failure, because the contest is difficult. Ambitions are only noble when

their path is steep. Who knows how indolent you might have become, had you found the prize too easily won. Come, come, Herbert, enough for the past; look forward now, and with good courage and hope. The next struggle will end differently; but, above all, wear a fair face before the world. I remember some French prisoners being brought into Courtray, who amused us so much by their gay and smiling air, and look of ease and satisfaction—their secret was, that defeat was never disgrace, save when it lowered the spirit, and made the heart droop. Theirs never failed, and I promise you we thought all the better of them."

"But my uncle—who is to tell him——"

"Let *me* tell him. I see you have begun a letter already——"

"That was written last night," said the boy, as the tears gushed forth afresh—"last night, when hope was almost certainty."

"Then I'll finish it," said Kate, taking up the half-written letter.

"Say to him—I would wish him to know all—say that I had beaten my opponents down to one, and that he, too, almost gave up the contest, when, somehow—I cannot now say exactly how or wherefore—I got into a dispute with the examiner about the meaning of a word in Terence; he seemed to enjoy the eagerness with which I defended my opinion for a time, and actually encouraged my persistance, until at length, my temper excited, and my brain on fire, I said something—I know not what—but it was evidently an offence, for he closed the book, and merely replied—'Enough, sir, I give your opponent the premium; his temper more than compensates for any deficiency in his scholarship;' and I was beaten." The last words evoked all his sorrow once more, and the youth burst into tears.

"That, then, I call unfair," said Kate, passionately, "unless the gentleman were the arbiter of temperament, as well as talent. Come, Herbert, even this should reconcile you to your fortune: you have not failed unworthily."

"But my uncle, Kate—my uncle will deem it far otherwise. To guard against this very error of my temper was almost the last pledge I made him, and here, in my first trial, see how I have kept my promise."

"Leave the explanation to me, only promise one thing—and mind, Herbert, this is a pledge there must be no forgetting—do all in your power—spare nothing to win the next time. I care not whether you ever carry away another prize within these walls; but one you must have. Is this agreed?—give me your hand upon it. There, that's like your own self, and now don't waste another thought on what's bygone. The Travers invited you to dine with them to-day."

"Oh, no—no."

"No—I have not any intention to press you, only come soon to see us—to see *me*." She kissed his forehead tenderly as she spoke the last word, and glided rapidly from the room.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

KATE O'DONOGHUE was more deeply affected by Herbert's failure than she had let appear to the youth, or even confessed to herself. It was not that the character of his ambition enlisted her sympathies, or engaged her interest. Far from it: she thought too meanly of such triumphs, and knew not how far they shed an influence on a future career. The habits of her education, all her early prejudices, disposed her to regard the life of a soldier as the only one becoming a gentleman. The passion for military glory, which the great victories of the Republic and the Consulate had spread throughout Europe, penetrated into every remote village of the continent, and even the prison-like walls of the convent did not keep out the spirit-stirring sounds of drum and trumpet, the tramp of marching hosts, and the proud clangor of war. It was a time when the soldier was every thing. There was but one path in life by which to win honour, rank, fame, and fortune. Even the humblest might strive, for the race was open to all; or, in the phrase of the period, every conscript left a spare corner in his knapsack for his future "baton de marechal."

All she had ever seen of foreign society, partook of this character. For, strangely enough, on the ruin of an aristocracy, a new and splendid chivalry was founded—a chivalry, whose fascinations covered many a wrong, and made many a bad cause glorious by the heroism it evoked! The peaceful path in life was, then, in her estimate, the inglorious one. Still, her proud nature could not brook defeat in any thing. It was not without its influence upon the hearts and minds of her house, that the eagle figured as their crest. The soaring bird, with outstretched wing, careering high above his compeers, told of a race who once, at least,

thought no ambition above their daring; and she was worthy of the haughtiest of her ancestors.

Too proud to enter into any detail of Herbert's failure, she dismissed the subject as briefly as she could, and made her appearance in the drawing-room without any perceptible change of manner; nor did she appear to take any notice of the announcement made by Sir Marmaduke to his son, that Hemsworth, who had just arrived from Scotland, would join the family circle at dinner. Kate had never seen him, but his name was long associated in her mind with anecdotes of oppression and cruelty to her uncle—of petty insults and annoyances which the letters from Carrig-na-curra used constantly to tell of, and of which her relatives abroad had often descanted in her hearing. The picture she had drawn of him in her own mind was not a flattering one—composed of features and ingredients which represented all that was base, low-minded, and treacherous—a vulgar sycophant, and a merciless tyrant. What was her astonishment, almost her chagrin, to discover, that Hemsworth entered the room a gentleman-like person, of about five-and-forty, tall, and well-formed, with regular features, rather melancholy in their expression than otherwise, and with a voice singularly low, soft, and pleasing, his manner a mixture of well-bred ease, and that excessive deference so often seen in those who have passed a long portion of life about persons of rank superior to their own, but without the slightest trace, that she could discover, of any thing subservient. With all her disposition to be critical, she could find little fault with either his manner or his conversation, nor could she detect any appearance of affectation. On the contrary, he seemed affable, like one who felt himself among friends, and need set no limits to his natural frankness. On the several topics he talked, he spoke with good sense and fairness; and even when the often agitated question of the state of Ireland was alluded to, he surprised Kate by the absence of any violent or exaggerated tone, speaking of the people in terms of kindliness and even affection—lauding the native virtues of their character, and dwelling with pleasure on the traits which advantageously distinguish them from the peasantry of other lands.

She listened at first with suspicion and distrust, then, by degrees, with interested attention, and, at last, with actual delight, to the narrative he gave of the social condition of Ireland; in which he laboured to show that a mistaken estimate of the people by England—a misconception of the national character, a contempt of it, perhaps—had perpetuated usages, which, by their injustice, had excited the hatred and animosity of the country, and led to that condition of insulting depre-

ciation on one side, and proud defiance on the other, which the two people exhibited towards each other.

So well and ably did he sustain his part—so powerfully support each position by reference to some fact with which his ample memory supplied him—that Sir Marmaduke was eventually obliged to confess himself vanquished, though unconvinced—who ever was, when worsted?—and Frederick, chagrined at the favour Kate bestowed on the speaker, merely remarked as he concluded—

"Very conclusive and satisfactory, I have no doubt, it is; but, in my mind, all you have said goes to prove, that we English are a very inferior nation, and very unworthily placed in rule and governance over a people so much our superiors."

Kate's eyes flashed with an unwonted fire, and for an instant she felt almost unable to control the temptation to answer this taunt; but a quiet smile of half acquiescence on Hemsworth's face so adequately expressed what she wished but dared not say, that she merely returned the smile, and was silent.

Had Hemsworth's whole object been on that evening to disabuse Kate O'Donoghue of her dislike to him—to obliterate all memory of the wrongs with which she had heard him charged towards her family—he could not have chosen a more successful path. There was the very degree of firmness and decision she admired in the manner he gave his opinions, and yet all the courtesy of one who would not be supposed capable of advancing them as incontrovertible or irrefutable. They were merely his sentiments—his mode of seeing and estimating particular events, of which another might judge differently. For all he advanced he was ready to show his reasons—they might be shallow, they might be inconclusive—but they were *his*, and, fortunately for his chance of winning her favour, they were *her* opinions also.

"So you think we shall have no outbreak, Hemsworth," said Sir Marmaduke, as they sat at tea.

"I scarcely go so far," said he, gravely. "There are too many reasons for an opposite fear, to say so much, even if the Secretary of State did not assure us that the danger is over. The youth of Ireland will always be dangerous, when left without a career, or a road to their ambition; and from them, any peril that may now be apprehended will certainly come. Many young men of the best families of the country, whose estates are deeply incumbered—heavy mortgages and large dowries weighing them down—are ready to join in any bold attempt which promises a new order of things. They see themselves forgotten in the distribution of all patronage—excluded from every office—sometimes for

reasons of religion—sometimes for family, even for a mere name's sake. They are ready to play a bold game, where losing is only quicker ruin, and to gain would be a glorious victory."

"But what could a few rash and desperate young men like these effect against a power so great and so consolidated as England?"

"Little, perhaps, as regards the overthrow of a Government; but a world of injury to the prospect of future quiet. The rebellion of a week —ay, a day—in Ireland, will sow the seeds of fifty years of misery, and retard the settlement of peaceful relations at least another century. Had the Minister made the same concessions here he was glad to accord to Scotland—had he, without insulting a nationality, converted it into a banner under which loyalty was only rendered more conspicuous—you might have, perchance, seen a different order of things in Ireland."

"For the life of me, I cannot see the evils and wrongs these people labour under. I have a very large Irish acquaintance in London, and pleasanter, happier fellows cannot exist than they are."

"All the young men of family in Ireland are not in the Guards," said Hemsworth, with a smile, which, with all its blandishment, very thinly covered over the sarcasm of his remark.

Frederick's face flushed angrily, and he turned away without speaking.

"Should we not ask pardon of the ladies for this subject of our conversation?" said Hemsworth. "I am sure neither Miss Travers nor Miss O'Donoghue deem the topic interesting or amusing."

"On the contrary, sir, I believe I may reply for both of us," said Kate, "whatever concerns the fortunes of a country we have so near at heart, has all our sympathy; and, as an Irish girl, I feel grateful for your explanation of motives which, while I appreciate, I should still be unable so satisfactorily to account for."

"How happy I am to meet my countrywoman's approval," said Hemsworth, bowing courteously, and with a marked emphasis directing his speech to Kate.

The manner in which he spoke the words was so palpably intended for herself, that she felt all the charm of a flattery to which the disparity of their years imparted force.

Soon after tea, Sir Marmaduke retired with Hemsworth to his study. Frederick took his leave at the same time, and Sybella and Kate were left alone together.

"I have a long letter to write this evening, my dear Sybella," said Kate, after they had talked some time. "Poor Herbert has failed in his examination, and I have promised to break the news to my uncle.

Not so difficult a task as the poor boy deems, but one to which he is himself unequal."

"Does he then feel it so deeply?" said Sybella, timidly.

"Too much, as regards the object of the ambition; but no more than he ought as a defeat. It is so bad to be beaten, Sybella," said she, with a sharp distinctness on each word. "I shall hate the sight of that University until he carries off the next prize; and then—then I care not whether his taste incline him for another effort;" and so saying, she embraced her friend, and they parted for the night.

The epistle which Kate had promised to conclude was in itself a lengthy one—written at different intervals during the week before the examination, and containing a minute account of his progress, his hopes and his fears, up to that very moment. There was little in it which could interest any but him to whom it was addressed, and to whom every allusion was familiar, and the reference to each book and subject thoroughly known—what difficulties he had found here, what obscurity there—how well he had mastered this, how much he feared he might have mistaken the other—until on the evening of the first day's examination, when the following few lines, written with a trembling hand, appeared:—

"They say I shall gain it. H—— called my translation of Horace a brilliant one, and asked the Vice-Provost to listen to my repeating it. I heard I gave it in blank verse. Oh, my dearest uncle, am I deceiving myself, and deceiving you? Shall I be able to write thus to-morrow night?"

Then came one tremulous line, dated, "Twelve o'clock:"—

"Better and better—I might almost even now say, victory; but my heart is too much excited to endure a chance."

"And it remains for me, my dear uncle," wrote Kate after these words, "to fulfil the ungrateful task of bearing bad tidings; and I, who have never had the good fortune to bring you happiness, must now speak to you of misfortune.—My dear cousin has failed."

She followed these few lines by the brief narrative Herbert had given her—neither seeking to extenuate his errors, nor excuse his rashness—well knowing in her heart that Sir Archy would regard the lesson thus conveyed, an ample recompense for the honour of a victory so hardly lost.

"It is to you he looks for comfort—to you, sir, whom his efforts were all made to please, and for whose praise his weary nights and toilsome days were offered. You, who know more of the human heart than I do, can tell how far so severe a discouragement may work for good or evil on his future life; for myself, I feel the even current of prosperity

is but a sluggish stream, that calls for no efforts to stem its tide; and were his grief over, I'd rather rejoice that he has found a conflict, because he may now discover he has courage to meet it.

"Even I, to follow a theme as dispiriting, even I, grow weary of pleasure, and tired of gaiety. The busy world of enjoyment leaves not a moment free for happiness, and already I am longing to be back in the still valley of Glenflesk. It is not that Dublin is not very brilliant, or that society has less of agreeability than I expected—both have exceeded my anticipations; nor is it, that I have not been what we should call in France 'successful' in my 'debut'—far from that, I am the fashion, or, rather, half the fashion—Sybella dividing public favour with me;—but, somehow, nobody contradicts me here—no one has courage to tell me I'm wrong—no one will venture to say, what you have often said, and even oftener looked, that 'I talked of what I knew nothing;' and, in fact, my dear uncle, every one is so very much in love with me, that I am beginning to detest them, and would give the world to be once more at home, before I extend the hatred to myself, which I must inevitably end by doing, if nobody anticipates me in the sentiment.

"You told me I should prove faithless to you. Well, I have refused heaven knows how many 'brilliant offers,' for such even the proposers called them. Generals of fourscore, guardsmen of twenty, dignitaries in the church, sergeants learned in the law, country gentlemen in hordes, two baronets, and one luckless viscount, have asked for the valueless hand that writes these lines; and yet—and yet, my dear chevalier, I shall still write myself at the bottom of this page, Kate O'Donoghue. I have no doubt you are very vain of my constancy, and will be so when you read this; and it is right you should be, for, I promise you, in my 'robe, couleur de cerise,' looped with white roses, and my 'chapeau de paysanne,' I am a very pretty person indeed—at least, it seems a point the twelve judges agree upon, and the Master of the Rolls tells me, 'that with such long eye-lashes I might lift my eyes very high indeed.'

"And now, my dear, kind uncle, divide your sorrow between your niece who is dying of vanity, and your nephew who is sick of grief—continue your affection to both—and believe me, in all sincerity of heart, your own fond and faithful,

"KATE O'DONOGHUE.

"I have met Hemsworth, and, strange to say, found him both pleasant and agreeable."

Such were the concluding lines of an epistle, in which few, who did not possess Sir Archy's acuteness, could successfully trace any thing of the real character of the writer.

CHAPTER XXX.

OLD CHARACTERS WITH NEW FACES.

At the time we speak of, Clontarf was the fashionable watering-place of the inhabitants of Dublin; and although it boasted of little other accommodation than a number of small thatched cabins could afford, and from which the fishermen removed to give place to their more opulent guests, yet, thither the great and the wealthy of the capital resorted in summer, to taste the pleasures of a sea side, and that not inferior one, the change of life and habit, entailed by altered circumstances and more restricted spheres of enjoyment.

If, with all the aid of sunshine and blue water, waving foliage and golden beach, this place had an aspect of modest poverty in its whitened walls and net-covered gardens in summer, in winter its dreariness and desolation were great indeed. The sea swept in long waves the narrow road, even to the doors of the cabins, the muddy foam settling on the window sills, and even drifting to the very roofs; the thatch was fastened down with strong ropes, assisted by oars and spars, to resist the wild gale that generally blew from the south-east. The trim cottages of summer were now nothing but the miserable hovels of the poor, their gardens waste, their gay aspect departed; even the stirring signs of life seemed vanished; few, if any, of the inhabitants stirred abroad, and save some muffled figure that moved past, screening his face from the beating storm, all was silent and motionless. The little inn, which in the summer time was thronged from morning till night, and from whose open windows the merry laugh and the jocund sound of happy voices poured, was now fast shuttered up, and all the precautions of a voyage were taken against the dreaded winter; even to the sign of a gigantic crab, rudely carved in wood and painted red, every thing was removed, and a single melancholy dip candle burned in the bar, as if keeping watch over the sleeping revelry of the place.

If such were the gloomy features without, within doors matters wore a more thriving aspect. In a little parlour behind the bar a brisk fire was burning, before which stood a table neatly prepared for supper; the covers were laid for two, but the provision of wine displayed seemed suited to a larger number. The flashy-looking prints upon the walls

shone brightly in the ruddy blaze; the brass fender and the glasses sparkled in its clear light, and even to the small, keen eyes of Billy Corcoran, the host, who kept eternally running in and out, to see all right, every thing presented a very cheering contrast to the bleak desolation of the night without.

It was evident that Mr. Corcoran's guests were behind time; his impatience was not to be mistaken. He walked from the kitchen to the parlour and back again without ceasing, now, adding a turf to the fire, now, removing the roasting chickens a little farther from the blaze, and anon, bending his ear to listen if perchance he could catch the sound of approaching wheels. He had sat down on every chair of the parlour, he had taken a half glass out of each decanter on the table, he had sharpened every knife in turn, and in fact resorted to every device to cheat time, when suddenly the sound of a carriage was heard on the road, and the next moment he unbarred the door and admitted two persons, whose dripping hats and soaked great coats bore evidence to the downpour without.

"Well, Billy," said the first who entered, "this rain will beat down the wind at last, and we shall be able to get some fish in the market."

"Sorra bit, sir," said Billy, as he assisted the speaker to remove his wet garments, leaving the other stranger to his own devices. "The wind is coming more round to the east, and I know from the noise on the Bull we'll have plenty of it. I was afeard something happened you, sir; you're an hour behind the time you said yourself."

"Very true—so I am. I was detained at a dinner party, and my friend here also kept me waiting a few minutes for him."

"It was not my fault," interposed the other; "I was ready when ——"

"Never mind—it was of no consequence whatever; the only misfortune was, we could find no coach, and were forced to put up with a car, and got wet for our pains; but the supper, Bill—the supper."

"Is smoking hot on the table," was the reply; and as he opened the door into the parlour, the fact declared itself to their senses.

The strangers were soon seated at the meal, and like men who could relish its enjoyment not the less for the merit of what they had quitted without doors. It is not necessary to consume much time in presenting them to our readers; they are both already known to him. One was Mr. Hemsworth; the other no less a person than Lanty Lawler, the horse-dealer. One only remark is necessary. Familiar as these characters already are, they here appeared in aspect somewhat different from what they have hitherto exhibited. Hemsworth, no longer the

associate of fashionable company, had exchanged his silken deferential manner for an air of easy confidence that seemed to fit him even better; Lanty, on the other hand, had lost all his habitual self-possession, looked abashed and sheepish, and seemed for all the world, as though he were in the hands of one, who could dispose of his destiny as he willed it. All the got up readiness of his wit, all his acquired frankness were now gone, and in their place a timid hesitating manner that bespoke the most abject fear and terror; it was evident, too, that he struggled hard to conceal these signs of trepidation. He ate voraciously of all before him, and endeavoured by the pre-occupation of the table to cover his real sentiments at the moment; he drank, too, freely, filling a large goblet to the brim with sherry several times during the meal; nor was this unnoticed by Hemsworth, who at last interposed in a calm, but commanding tone, as he laid his hand on the decanter—

"A pipe of it, if you please, Lanty; you may have a whole bank of the Guadalquiver for your own drinking at another time; but now, if you please, let us have calm heads and cool judgments. It is some time since we met, and it may be longer ere we have another opportunity like the present."

"Very true, sir," said Lanty, submissively, as he pushed his untasted glass before him. "It was the wetting I was afeard of; my clothes were soaked through."

Hemsworth paid no attention to the excuse, but sat for some minutes deeply sunk in his reflections; then lifting his head suddenly, he said—

"And so these papers have never been found?"

"Never, sir. I did my best to get them. I spent days at the place, and had others looking besides. I said I'd give five guineas—and you know what a reward that is down there—to the man who would bring them to me; but from that hour to this, I never set eyes on them."

While he was speaking these words, Hemsworth's eyes never turned from him. They were fixed on him, not with any expression of severity or harshness, neither did the glance indicate suspicion. It was a steady, passionless stare, rather like one seeking an explanation, than prejudging a motive.

"You were quite certain that they were the papers we wanted?"

"Sure I opened them—sure I read the writing myself, when I took them out of the old man's desk."

"They had better have remained there," said Hemsworth to himself, but loud enough for the other to hear; then rallying quickly, he added, "no matter, however, we have evidence enough of another kind. Where are the letters Mark wrote to the Delegates."

"I think Mr. Morrissy has most of them, sir," said Lanty, hesitatingly; "he is the man that keeps all the writings."

"So he may be, Lanty; but you have some of them yourself: three or four are as good as thirty or forty, and you have as many as that—aye, and here in your pocket, too, this minute. Come, my worthy friend, you may cheat me in horse flesh, whenever I'm fool enough to deal with you; but at this game I'm your master. Let me see these letters."

"How would I have them, Captain, at all," said Lanty, imploringly; "sure you know as well as me, that I'm not in the scheme at all."

"Save so far as having a contract to mount five hundred men of the French on their landing in Ireland, the money for which you have partly received, and for which I hold the check, countersigned by yourself, Master Lanty. Very pretty evidence in a Court of justice—more than enough to hang you, that's all."

"There's many a one sould a horse, and didn't know what use he was for," replied Lanty, half rudely.

"Very true; but a contract that stipulates for strong cattle, able to carry twelve stone men with full cavalry equipments, does not read like an engagement to furnish plough horses." Then altering his tone, he added, "No more of this, sir, I can't afford time for such fencing. Show me these letters—show me, that you have done something to earn your own indemnity, or by G—d, I'll let them hang you, as I'd see them hang a dog."

Lanty became lividly pale, as Hemsworth was speaking; a slight convulsive tremor shook his lip for a moment, and he seemed struggling to repress a burst of passion, as he held the chair with either hand; but he uttered not a word. Hemsworth leisurely drew forth his watch, and placed it on the table before him, saying—

"It wants eleven minutes of one o'clock; I'll give you to that hour to make up your mind, whether you prefer five hundred pounds in your hand, or take your place in the dock with the rest of them; for, mark me, whether we have your evidence or not, they are equally in our hands. It is only an economy of testimony I'm studying here, and I reserve my other blackguards for occasions of more moment."

The taunt would appear an ill-timed one at such a minute; but Hemsworth knew well the temperament of him he addressed, and did not utter a syllable at random. Lanty still preserved silence, and looked as though doggedly determined to let the minutes elapse without speaking; his head slightly sunk on his chest, his eyes bent downwards, he sat perfectly motionless. Hemsworth meanwhile refilled his glass, crossed his arms before him, and seemed awaiting, without impatience,

the result of the other's deliberation. At length the hand approached the figure ; it wanted but about half a minute of the time, and Hemsworth, taking up the watch from the table, held it before Lanty's eyes, as he said—

"Time is nearly up, Master Lawler ; do you refuse ?"

"I only ask one condition," said Lanty, in a faint whisper.

"You shall make no bargains : the letters, or ——. It is too late now ;" and with these words he replaced his watch in his pocket, and rose from the table.

Lanty never moved a muscle, while Hemsworth approached the fireplace, and rang the bell. In doing so, he turned his back to the horse-dealer, but commanded a view of him through means of the little glass above the chimney. He stood thus for a few seconds, when Lanty—in whose flashing eyes, and darkened colour, inward rage was depicted—suddenly thrust his arm into the breast of his coat. Hemsworth turned round at once, and seizing the arm in his powerful grasp, said in a cool, determined voice—

"No, no, Lanty ; I'm armed, too.

"It was the pocket-book I was feeling for, sir," said Lanty, with a sickly effort at a smile, while he drew forth a black leather case, and handed it towards Hemsworth. "They are all there—seventeen letters—besides two French commissions, signed by young Mark, and a receipt for four hundred pounds in French gold."

"You must find it hard to get bullets for those pistols I gave you, Lanty," said Hemsworth, in a tranquil voice. "I forgot to let you have the bullet-mould with them. Remind me of it to-morrow or next day."

Lanty muttered a faint "I will," but looked the very picture of abject misery as he spoke.

"Let me see them, Lanty," said Hemsworth, in a manner, as calm and unconcerned as could be. "If I don't mistake, they are nearly a quarter of an inch in the bore."

"About that same, sir," replied Lawler, while he drew forth the two pistols from the same breast-pocket he had taken the letters.

Hemsworth first examined one, and then the other, leisurely, passing the ramrod into each in turn, and then opening the pans, inspected the priming, adjusting the powder carefully with his finger. "You spoil such pistols as these, by loading with two bullets, Lanty," said he, as he handed them back to him. "The bore is too perfect for such coarse usage. Now, this is a less delicate weapon, and will bear harder usage," and he drew forth a short pistol, containing four revolving barrels, each

as wide as the bore of a musket. Lanty gazed in astonishment and terror at the murderous implement, into which the hand fitted by a handle like that of a saw. Hemsworth played the spring by which the barrels moved, with a practised finger, and seemed to exult in the expression of Lanty's terror, as he watched them. Then quickly replacing the weapon, he resumed—"Well, I am glad, for your own sake, that you are more reasonable. You ought to know, that I never place dependence on only one man, for any single service. Such would be merely to play the part of slave, instead of master. But, first of all, how did you become possessed of these letters?"

"I was charged by Mark to deliver them to the Delegates, and as they never saw his hand-writing, I just copied the letters, and kept all the originals, so that he has received his answers regularly, and never suspects what has happened."

"All right so far—and the younger brother—what of him?"

"Oh, he is too much under old M'Nab's influence to be caught. I wouldn't say but that he's a Protestant this minute."

"You appear to be greatly shocked at your suspicion, Lanty," said Hemsworth, smiling. "Well, well; we must hope for the best; and now as to this other fellow—where and how can I see him—this Talbot I mean?"

"Ay, that's the puzzle," replied Lanty, with a greater appearance of ease in his manner than before. "You never can meet him when you look for him; but he's at your elbow every day, twenty times, if you don't want him."

"Could you not manage a meeting for me with him, down here, Lanty?—I'll take care of the rest."

"I don't think so; he's a wary fellow; he gave me a fright once or twice already, by a word he let drop. I am not easy in his company at all."

"False or true, he would be an immense service to us," said Hemsworth, musingly. "If I only could see and speak with him, I'd soon convince him that he incurred no risk himself. It's a bad sportsman shoots his decoy duck, Lanty," and he pinched his cheek good-humouredly as he spoke. Lanty endeavoured to laugh, but the effort was a feeble one. Meanwhile, the host, now summoned for the second time, made his appearance, and by Hemsworth's orders, the car was brought round to the door; for, severe as the night was, he determined to return to the city.

"You are coming back to town, too, Lanty?" said he, in a tone of inquiry.

"No, sir; I'm going to stop here with Billy, if your honour has no objection?"

"None whatever. Remember to let me see you on Tuesday, when I shall have every thing in readiness for your journey south—till then, good bye;" so saying, and handing Corcoran two guineas in gold, for he paid liberally, Hemsworth mounted the car, and drove off.

Lanty looked after him, till the darkness shut out the view, and then buttoning his rough coat tightly around his throat, set out himself towards town, muttering as he went—"I wish it was the last I was ever to see of you."

CHAPTER XXXI.

SOME HINTS ABOUT HARRY TALBOT.

We must beg of our reader to retrace his steps once more to the valley of Glenflesk, but only for a fleeting moment. When last we left Carrig-na-curra it was at night, the party were at supper in the old tower, and Kerry stood outside, rehearsing to himself for the tenth time the manner in which he should open his communication. The sound of Mark's voice, raised above its ordinary pitch, warned him that his mission might not be without danger, if perchance any thing on his part might offend the youth. None knew better than Kerry the violent temper of the young O'Donoghue, and how little restraint he ever put upon any scheme he thought of to vent his humour on him who crossed him. It was an account of debtor and creditor then with him, how he should act; on the one side lay the penalties, on the other the rewards of his venture—how was he to escape the one and secure the other? A moment's reflection suggested the plan.

"I'll not go in, divil a step, but I'll tell I was convarsin' with them this half hour, and that the rope and the bit of lead is a new way they do have for catching mermaids and other faymale fishes in the Bay; and sure if I only say that there's an act of Parlimint agin doin' it, she'll not only believe it all, but she'll keep the saycret to her dying bed;" and

with this profound reflection on Mrs. Branagan's character, and a face of very well got up surprise, Kerry re-entered the kitchen to announce his discovery.

It is not our intention to dwell on the scene that followed; we have merely adverted to the fact inasmuch as that on the trivial circumstance of Kerry's resolve depended the discovery of a plot, which, if once known to M'Nab, would immediately have been communicated to the Government. The fates willed it otherwise, and when the party separated in the old tower, Sir Archy was as little satisfied concerning Talbot's character as ever, and as eager to ascertain whence and wherefore he came, and with what intention he had made Mark's acquaintance. With many a wily scheme for the morrow, the old man went to rest, determining to spare no pains to unravel the mystery—a fruitless resolve after all, for when day broke, Talbot and Mark were already away, many miles on the road to Dublin.

The O'Donoghue's first act on completing his arrangements with Swaby, was to place at Mark's disposal a sum of five hundred pounds, an amount far greater than ever the young man had at any time possessed in his life. Talbot, to whom the circumstance was told by Mark, readily persuaded him to visit Dublin, not merely for the pleasures and amusements of the capital, but that he might personally be made known to the Delegates, and see and confer with those who were the directors of the threatened rebellion. Talbot understood perfectly the kind of flattery which would succeed with the youth, and by allusion to his ancient lineage, his more than noble blood, the rights to which he was entitled, and to which he would unquestionably be restored, not only stimulated his ardour in the cause, but bound him in a debt of gratitude to all who encouraged him to engage in it.

Mark's character, whatever its faults, was candid and frank in every thing; he made no secret to his new friend of his present unhappiness, nor did he conceal that an unpaid debt of vengeance with respect to young Travers weighed heavily on his spirits. It was the first time in his life he had tasted the bitterness of an insult, and it worked like a deadly poison within him, sapping the springs of his health and rendering miserable the hours of his solitude; the thought rarely left him day or night, how was he to wipe out this stain? When Talbot, therefore, spoke of a visit to the capital, Mark cheerfully acceded, but rather from a secret hope that some opportunity might arise to gratify this cherished passion, than from any desire of witnessing the splendour of the metropolis; and while the one pictured the glittering scenes of festive enjoyment to which youth and money are the passports, the other darkly rumi-

nated on the chances of meeting his enemy and provoking him to a duel.

It was on the evening of the third day after they left Carrig-na-curra that they drew near the capital, and after a promise from Mark that in every thing he should be guided by his friend, nor take any step without his counsel and advice, they both entered the city.

"You see, Mark," said Talbot, as after passing through some of the wider and better lighted thoroughfares, they approached a less frequented and more gloomy part of the town; "you see, Mark, that the day is not come when we should occupy the place of honour, an humble and quiet hotel will best suit us for the present, but the hour is not very distant, my boy, when the proudest mansion of the capital will throw wide its doors to receive us. The Saxon has but a short tenure of it now."

"I don't see any reason for secrecy," said Mark, half-doggedly, "we have good names and a good purse, why then must we betake ourselves to this gloomy and desolate quarter."

"Because I am the guide," said Talbot, laughing, "and if that's not reason enough, that's the only one I will give you just now, but come, here we are, and I do not think you will complain of your entertainment." And as he spoke, the carriage entered the spacious court-yard of an old fashioned inn, which, standing in Thomas-street, commanded a view of the river through one of the narrow streets leading down to the quay.

"This was the fashionable house some fifty years back," said Talbot as he assisted his friend to alight; "and though the heyday of its youth is over, there are many generous qualities in its good old age—not your father's cellar can boast a better bottle of Burgundy."

Talbot's recommendation was far from being unmerited, the "Black Jack" as the inn was named, was a most comfortable house of the old school, with large, low-ceilinged rooms, wide stairs, and spacious corridors; the whole, furnished in a style, which, though far from pretending to elegance or fashion, possessed strong claims for the tired traveller, seeking rest and repose. Here then our young travellers alighted. Talbot being received with all the courteous urbanity due to an old acquaintance; the landlord himself appearing to do the honours of the house, and welcome a valued guest.

"We must get our host, Billy Crossley, to sup with us, Mark. No one can tell us so much of how matters are doing here, for, however it happens, Billy knows all the gossip of the day, fashionable, political, or sporting, he keeps himself up to what is going forward

everywhere." And so saying, Talbot at once hastened after the landlord to secure his company for the evening.

Billy was somewhat fastidious about bestowing his agreeability in general, but on the present occasion, he acceded at once, and in less than half-an-hour, the three were seated at a meal, which would not have disgraced an hotel of more pretensious exterior. Mr. Crossley doing the honours of the table, like a host entertaining his friends.

"I scarcely had expected to see you so soon, Mr. Talbot," said he, when the servants had left the room, and the party drew round the fire. "They told me you would pass the winter in the country."

"So I had intended, Billy, but as good luck would have it, I made an acquaintance in the south, which changed my plans, my friend, Mr. O'Donoghue here, and as he had never seen the capital, and knew nothing of your gay doings, I thought I'd just take a run back, and show him at least, the map of the land."

"My service to you, sir," said Billy, bowing to Mark; "it would be hard to have got a better guide than you have in Master Harry. I can assure you, so far as wickedness goes, he's a match for any thing here—from the Royal Barracks to Trinity College."

"Flattery, gross flattery, Bill. I was your own pupil, and you can't help partiality."

"You are a most favourable specimen of private tuition, there's no doubt of it," said Crossley, laughing, "and I have reason to be proud of you. Did Mr. O'Donoghue ever hear of your clearing out Hancey Hennessy at hazard—the fellow that carried the loaded dice?"

"Have done, Bill. None of these absurd stories now."

"Nor what a trick you played Corny Mehan at the spring meeting with the roan cob that knew how to limp when you wanted him?—as great a devil as himself, Mr. O'Donoghue. You'd swear the beast had a bad blood spavin if you saw him move, and he all the time a three-quarter bred horse, without a stain or a blemish about him."

Talbot seemed for a second or two somewhat uneasy at these familiar reminiscences of his friend Crossley, not knowing precisely how Mark might take them; but when he saw that a hearty laugh was the reception they met with, he joined in the mirth as freely as the others.

"The best of all was the Wicklow steeple-chase; sorrow doubt about it, that was good fun;" and Crossley laughed till his eyes streamed again with the emotion.

"You must tell me that," said Mark.

"It was just this:—Mister Henry there had a wager with Captain Steevens of the staff, that he'd reach the course before him, each start-

ing at the same moment from Quin's door at Bray. Well, what does he do, but bribes one of the boys to let him ride postillion to Steevens' chaise, because that way he was sure to win his wager. All went right. The blue jacket and boots fitted him neatly—they were both new—got on purpose for the day; and Mr. Talbot lay snug in the stable, waiting for the chaise to be ordered round, when down comes the word, 'Number four, two bays, you're wanted;' and up he jumps into the saddle, and trots round to the door, afraid of his life to look round, and keeping his chin sunk down in his cravat to hide his face. He never once looked back, but let the boys harness the cattle without saying a word.

"'My lord says you're to drive slow,' said one of the boys.

"He looked round, and what did he see, but an old man in the chaise with a horse-shoe wig, and in the full dress of a bishop.

"'Who is he at all?' said Talbot.

"'The Bishop of Cloyne,' whispered the boy; 'he's going up to the Levee.'

"'By my conscience, he is not,' said Talbot, for at that moment he spied Steevens starting from the door at a round trot, and with that he turned the bishop's horses sharp round, laid the whip heavily over them, and took the lead towards Wicklow.

"Never such cries were heard as the bishop's. Some say that he swore hard; but it isn't true—he prayed, and begged, and shouted—but no use. Talbot gave them the steel at every stride; and after a long slapping gallop, he drew up at the stand-house, with a cheer that shook the course; and a fine sight it was, to see the little man in the lawn sleeves stepping out, his face red with shame and passion.

"'Twelve miles in forty-two minutes, my lord,' said Talbot, showing his watch; 'hope your lordship won't forget the boy.'"

If Mark O'Donoghue enjoyed heartily the story, he was not the less surprised that Harry Talbot was the hero of it—all his previous knowledge of that gentleman leading him to a very different estimate of his taste and pursuits. Indeed, he only knew Talbot from his own lips, and from them he learned to regard him as the emissary despatched by the Irish party in France, to report on the condition of the insurgents in Ireland; and, if necessary, to make preparations for the French landing on the Irish shores. Mark could not well understand how any one charged with such a mission, could have either wasted his time or endangered his safety by any ridiculous adventures, and did not scruple to show his astonishment at the circumstance.

Talbot smiled significantly at the remark, and exchanged a glance with Crossley, while he answered—

"Placed in such a position as I have been for some years, Mark, many different parts have been forced upon me; and I have often found that there is no such safe mask against detection, as following out the bent of one's humour in circumstances of difficulty. An irresistible impulse to play the fool, even at a moment when high interests were at stake, has saved me more than once from detection; and from habit I have acquired a kind of address at the practice, that with the world passes for cleverness. And so, in turn, I have been an actor, a smuggler, a French officer, an Irish refugee, a sporting character, a man of pleasure, and a man of intrigue; and however such features may have blended themselves into my true character, my real part has remained undetected. Master Crossley here might furnish a hint or two towards it; but—but, as Peachem says, 'we could hang one another'—eh, Bill?"

A nod and a smile, more grave than gay, was Crossley's answer; and a silence ensued on all sides. There was a tone of seriousness even through the levity of what Talbot said, very unlike his ordinary manner; and Mark began, for the first time, to feel that he knew very little about his friend. The silence continued unbroken for some time; for while Mark speculated on the various interpretations Talbot's words might bear, Talbot himself was reflecting on what he had just uttered. There is a very strange, but not wholly unaccountable tendency in men of subtle minds, to venture near enough to disclosures to awaken the suspicions, without satisfying the curiosity of others. The dexterity with which they can approach danger, yet not incur it, is an exercise they learn to pride themselves upon; and as the Indian guides his canoe through the dangerous rapids of the St. Lawrence—now bending to this side and to that—each moment in peril, but ever calm and collected—so do they feel all the excitement of hazard in the game of address. Under an impulse of this kind was it that Talbot spoke, and the unguarded freedom of his manner showed even to so poor an observer as Mark, that the words contained a hidden meaning.

"And our gay city of Dublin—what of it, Billy?" said he, at length rallying from his mood of thought, as he nodded his head, and drank to Crossley.

"Pretty much as you have always known it. 'A short life and a merry one,' seems the adage in favour here. Every one spending his money and character——"

"Like gentlemen, Bill—that's the phrase," interrupted Talbot; "and a very comprehensive term it is, after all. But what is the Parliament doing?"

"Voting itself into Government situations."

"And the Viceroy?"

"Snubbing the Parliament."

"And the Government in England?"

"Snubbing the Viceroy."

"Well, they are all employed, at least; and, as the French say, that's always something. And who are the playmen now?"

"The old set. Tom Whaley and Lord Drogheda—your old friend, Giles Daxon—Sandy Moore——"

"Ah, what of Sandy? They told me he won heavily at the October races."

"So he did—beggared the whole club at hazard, and was robbed of the money the night after, when coming up through Naas."

"Ha! I never heard of that, Billy. Let us hear all about it."

"It's soon told, sir. Sandy, who never tries economy till he has won largely, and is reckless enough of money when on the verge of ruin, heard, on leaving the course, that a strange gentleman was waiting to get some one to join him in a chaise up to Dublin. Sandy at once sent the waiter to open the negociations, which were soon concluded, and the stranger appeared—a fat, unwieldy-looking old fellow, with a powdered wig and green goggles—not a very sporting style of travelling companion; but no matter for that, he had a dark chestnut mare with him, that looked like breeding, and with strength enough for any weight over a country.

"'She'll follow the chaise—my son taught her that trick,' said the old fellow, as he hobbled out of the inn, and took his place in the carriage.

"Well, in jumped Sandy, all his pockets bursting with guineas, and a book of notes crammed into his hat—very happy at his adventure, but prouder of saving half the posting than all besides.

"'Keep to your ten miles an hour, my lad, or not a sixpence,' said the old gentleman, and he drew his night-cap over his eyes, and was soon snoring away as sound as need be.

"That was the last was seen of him, however, for when the postillion drew up for fresh horses at Carrick's, they found Sandy alone in the chaise, with his hands tied behind him, and his mouth gagged. His companion and the dark chestnut were off, and all the winnings along with them."

"Cleverly done, by Jove," cried Talbot, in an ecstacy of admiration.

"What a contemptible fellow your friend Sandy must be," exclaimed Mark, in the same breath. "Man to man—I can't conceive the thing possible."

"A bold fellow, well armed, Mark," observed Talbot, gravely, "might do the deed, and Sandy be no coward after all."

Chatting in this wise, the first evening was spent; and if Mark was, at times, disposed to doubt the morality of his new friend, he was very far from questioning his knowledge of mankind; his observations were ever shrewd and caustic, and his views of life, those of one, who looked at the world with a scrutinizing glance, and although the young O'Donoghue would gladly have seen in his young companion some traces of the enthusiasm he himself experienced in the contemplated rising, he felt convinced that a cooler judgment, and a more calculating head than his, were indispensable requisites to a cause beset with so many dangers. He, therefore, implicitly yielded himself to Talbot's guidance, resolving not to go anywhere, nor see any one, even his brother, save with his knowledge and consent.

If the scenes into which Talbot introduced Mark O'Donoghue were not those of fashionable life, they were certainly as novel and exciting to one so young and inexperienced. The taverns resorted to by young men of fashion, the haunts of sporting characters, the tennis court, but more frequently still the houses where high play was carried on, he was all familiar with—knew the precise type of the company at each, and not a little of their private history; still it seemed as if he himself were but little known, and rather received for the recommendation of good address and engaging manners, than from any circumstance of previous acquaintance. Mark was astonished at this, as well as that, although now several weeks in Dublin, Talbot had made no advance towards introducing him to the leading members of the insurgent party, and latterly had even but very rarely alluded to the prospect of the contemplated movement.

The young O'Donoghue was not one to harbour any secret thought long unuttered in his breast, and he briefly expressed to Talbot his surprise—almost his dissatisfaction—at the life they were leading. At first Talbot endeavoured to laugh off such inquiries, or turn them aside by some passing pleasantry; but when more closely pressed, he avowed that his present part was a duty imposed upon him by his friends in France, who desired above all things to ascertain the feeling among young men of family and fortune in the metropolis—how they really felt affected towards England, and with what success, should French republicanism fail to convert them, would the fascinations of Parisian elegance and vice be thrown around them.

"There must be bribes for all temperaments, Mark," said he, at the end of a very lengthened detail of his views and stratagems. "Glory is

enough for such as you, and happily you can have wherewithal to satisfy a craving appetite; but some must be bought by gold, some by promises of vengeance upon others, some by indemnities for past offences, and not a few by the vague hope of change, which disappointed men ever regard as for the better. To sound the depths of all such motives is part of my mission here, and hence, I have rigidly avoided those by whom I am more than slightly known; but in a week or two I shall exchange this part for another, and then, Mark, we shall mix in the gayer world of the squares, where your fair cousin shines so brilliantly. Meanwhile have a little patience with me, and suffer me to seem sometimes inconsistent, that I may be least so in reality. I see you are not satisfied with me, Mark, and I am sorry to incur a friend's reproach even for a brief season; but come—I make you a pledge. To-day is the 12th; in five days more the Viceroy gives his St. Patrick's ball, at which I am to meet one of our confederates. You seem surprised at this; but where can man speak treason so safely as under the canopy of the Throne?"

"But how do you mean to go there? You do not surely expect an invitation."

"Of course not; but I shall go notwithstanding, and you with me. Ay, Mark, never frown and shake your head. This same ball is a public assembly, to which all presented at the Levees are eligible, without any bidding or invitation. Who is to say that Harry Talbot and Mark O'Donoghue have not paid their homage to mock royalty? If you mean that there is some danger in the step, I agree with you there is; but you are not the man, I take it, to flinch on that account."

This adroit stroke of Talbot's settled the matter; and Mark felt ashamed to offer any objection to a course, which, however disinclined to, he now believed was accompanied by a certain amount of peril.

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